



# BEHAVIOR & HEALTH: TIPS FOR A REJUVENATING SUMMER

School's out, surf's up, and the burgers are sizzling on the grill. Hooray! If you're psyched for summer but wondering how to combine fun and exuberance with good health, you're in luck, because many of the activities and behaviors we associate with summer are great for your physical and emotional wellness. For a summer that leaves you feeling rejuvenated, relaxed and healthy, consider these tips:

## GO TO THE BEACH

A new study backs up your gut feeling: hanging out at the beach is good for you. The sight of water, the sound of crashing waves, the expanse of the shore: being at the beach soothes nerves and relieves stress.

- For an in-depth look on the healing properties of the beach, check out Elane Conis's May 2007 L.A. Times article, "Psyche and the sea" (go to [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com) and search for 'Conis').

## GET SOME SUN

Think about the lift you get when you wake up to a gorgeous, sunny day. Sunlight is a powerful mood enhancer that's been shown to help combat depression, and it's crucial for getting your body to produce the vitamin D it needs for good bone health. Adequate vitamin D (which most people don't get through diet alone) reduces your risk of osteoporosis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and several cancers, including colorectal, ovarian and breast cancer.

But be careful. Limit yourself to 5-15 minutes a day in the sun without sunscreen (depending on your skin color and other factors), avoid mid-day sun, and wear sunscreen outdoors the rest of the time.

- See "Benefits of Moderate Sun Exposure" on the Harvard Medical School's online Family Health Guide (<http://www.health.harvard.edu/fhg/updates/update0604d.shtml>).
- Get sun safety tips and more from the Skin Cancer Foundation ([www.skincancer.org/prevention](http://www.skincancer.org/prevention))

## EAT WATERMELON

Summer is a great time to transform your diet with fresh, seasonal fruit and vegetables. One summertime treat that packs a great nutritional punch is watermelon. It contains antioxidants, including vitamins A and C, as well as lycopene, a carotenoid that may lower your risk of many types of cancer. It's also extremely low in fat and calories.

- Visit [www.watermelon.org](http://www.watermelon.org), the National Watermelon Promotion Board website, for recipes, interesting watermelon facts and detailed nutritional information.

## DRINK ICED TEA

On a sweltering day, what's better than sitting out on the porch with a tall, cool glass of iced tea? Ancient Chinese wisdom and modern day science agree that tea may help ward off cancer, lower stress and improve memory. Just remember to hold the sweetener (or keep it to a minimum), and avoid the many processed tea beverages that contain added sugar and preservatives.

- Adagio Tea's website has all sorts of information on the varied health benefits of tea ([www.adagio.com/info/health\\_benefits.html](http://www.adagio.com/info/health_benefits.html)).
- Find out what's in those bottled iced tea beverages by reading, "Iced Tea – Give us the Benefits, Hold the Preservatives" ([www.teamuse.com/article\\_040701.html](http://www.teamuse.com/article_040701.html)).

## PLAY MORE

Most people who don't exercise regularly say they just don't have the time. With summer's longer days, however, you might find it easier to get up earlier or stay active later. How about a walk or run before your morning shower? Or joining a recreational summer sports league that has games in the evenings? Contact your local sports & recreation department to see what's happening in your neck of the woods.

- Visit [www.active.com](http://www.active.com) to find and register for a local 5k or other event.

## SOCIALIZE

Are backyard barbecues good for you? They are if they're helping you bond with friends and family. Having a strong, supportive social network has long been linked to lower stress levels and increased longevity, and science is backing up those suppositions.

- Read about how friendships between women enhance physical and emotional health ([www.seattletimes.com](http://www.seattletimes.com), search for "women reap health benefits").
- Check out study results indicating that social connections reduce the risk of heart attack for men ([www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org), search for "social connections").

## A PLAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Now, get out and enjoy your summer! Ideally, you'll have so much fun following these tips that you develop healthy habits that carry over into fall, winter and spring.

*This article is for informational and self-help purposes only. It should not be treated as a substitute for legal or financial advice, or as a substitute for consultation with a qualified professional.*

### Tried the Beach and Still Stressed Out? Call your EAP!

Face-to-face and telephonic consultations are available to help you with depression, stress, anxiety and other emotional health and work-life issues.\* Call **any time** for assessment, assistance and referral to additional services.

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**Or visit us online at:**

**[www.eap4soc.mhn.com](http://www.eap4soc.mhn.com)**

**(register with the access code "SOC")**

\*Call the number above or your benefits administrator to find out how many counseling sessions you're eligible to receive. Benefits may vary depending on your eligibility and employment type.

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